

Written Testimony

Public Health Committee Public Hearing

March 19, 2014

Testimony on Raised Bill 438

An Act Concerning Certification of Stroke Centers

INTRO:

Good afternoon Senator Gerratana, Representative Johnson and distinguished members of the Public Health Committee. My name is Rom Duckworth, from Sherman, CT and I am here today to ask for your support for **Senate Bill 438, An Act Concerning Certification of Stroke Centers**.

BODY:

As a paramedic for more than 20 years I have provided emergency healthcare in the field in cities and towns in virtually every corner of Connecticut. As a healthcare educator I've had the opportunity to share my knowledge of emergency services with healthcare providers across the United States. When we talk about stroke, I emphasize that this is not a matter of life and death. To think of stroke as a matter of life and death is an oversimplification. It is not simply a matter of doing something right and the patient lives, or failing and they die. We know that when a patient has a stroke as minutes tick by, brain cells die. This is true, but it is also an oversimplification to have that kind of clinical discussion. As a stroke patient awaits definitive treatment a minute goes by and the brain cells die that hold the memory of that person's first kiss. Another minute goes by and the brain cells die that hold their memory of who their wife is. Another minute, and we lose the brain cells that hold that person's ability to walk, or talk, or feed themselves. This is not just what I learned from taking care of stroke patients. This is what I learned from my grandfather's stroke. That is why I seek to teach healthcare providers that they have to work together at every stage from EMS in the field, to emergent care in the emergency department, to critical care in the hospital, to seize every opportunity they can to save minutes, to save brain cells, to save every part of who that patient is. Stroke is the leading cause of long-term disability. The only way that we can work to change that for citizens of Connecticut is to provide a framework, a system of care where the EMT's and paramedics, doctors and nurses do not just work as hard as they can, but are able to work together to improve the outcome for stroke patients and their families.

CONCLUSION:

In a number of different EMS systems in Connecticut I have cared for patients in high-rise apartments where hospitals were minutes away and rural farmhouses where hospitals were almost an hour away. These differences are the reason that we need this bill to provide all of the EMS systems in Connecticut with the guidance and protocols that will help them best integrate with the hospital stroke teams awaiting them at designated primary stroke centers throughout our state. It is for this reason that on behalf of Connecticut's EMS providers I ask you to pass this bill and help us care for the stroke patients and their families.